

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 IO-15 ISO-00 INT-08 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01

SPC-03 AID-20 COME-00 FRB-02 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12

CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 L-03 NSC-10 SS-15 STR-08

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R 050700Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4040

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY KIGALI

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMCONSUL BUKAVU

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BUJUMBURA 0946

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EMIN, BY

SUBJ: ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE OF BURUNDI NICKEL DISCOVERY

DEPARTMENT PASS BUREAU OF MINES

ALSO PASS USDOC FOR OIFI COM/BIC

JOHANNESBURG FOR MINERALS OFFICER

FROM MURCHISON, REGIONAL MINERALS OFFICER

REF: BUJUMBURA 839 (NOTAL) AND 783

BEGIN SUMMARY: EIGHT MONTHS' (NOVEMBER 1972-JULY 1973)

INVESTIGATION OF MUSONGATI MASSIF BY UNDP MINERAL EXPLORATION

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TEAM INDICATES PROBABLE EXISTENCE OF SIZEABLE NICKELIFEROUS ORE

BODY. HOWEVER, NO CONCLUSIONS AS TO TONNAGE, GRADE OR MINABILITY ARE WARRANTED ON BASIS OF CURRENTLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION.
END SUMMARY.

1. DISCOVERY OF "IMPORTANT NICKEL DEPOSIT" HAS NOW BEEN OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED IN AN OVERLY OPTIMISTIC OCTOBER 2 PRESS RELEASE FROM GRB MINISTRY OF ECONOMY. UNDP MINERALS RESEARCH TEAM PROJECT MANAGER WALEFFE HAS EXPRESSED CONCERN IN VIEW OF PRELIMINARY AND SPECULATIVE NATURE INITIAL FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS HIS TEAM. HE NOTES THAT HIS PRELIMINARY REPORT AND COMMENTARY BY SENIOR GEOLOGIST (BUJUMBURA 783) WERE NOT INTENDED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE. (HE IS PROBABLY NOT AWARE OF THEIR BEING OUTSIDE UN OR GRB OFFICIAL HANDS.)

2. PERSONAL CONCLUSION OF MURCHISON IS THAT BOTH OF THESE DOCUMENTS, PARTICULARLY COMMENTARY, MAKE STATEMENTS NOT SUPPORTED BY ACTUAL RESULTS OF PROSPECTING. THIS CONCLUSION REACHED AFTER A DETAILED STUDY OF DATA IN EMBASSY BUJUMBURA, CONVERSATIONS WITH DIRECTOR OF GRB GEOLOGY AND MINES DEPARTMENT AND UN PROJECT MANAGER AND EXAMINATION OF ROCK SAMPLES TAKEN BY UN FIELD TEAM. A VISIT TO GENERAL AREA OF EXPLORATION WAS MADE IN COMPANY OF EMBASSY OFFICER, BUT NO INSPECTION OF ACTUAL DRILLING OR SAMPLING SITES WAS FEASIBLE.

3. INTERPRETATIONS OF MINERALOGY AND STRUCTURAL RELATIONS OF ROCKS OF RUBARA, GEYUKA AND BEHINDA PLATEAUS WERE MADE BY COMPETENT QUALIFIED GEOLOGISTS, AND THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THEIR STATEMENTS REGARDING GEOLOGY OF REGION ARE OPEN TO QUESTION. DESPITE AN OBVIOUSLY LIMITED EXPLORATION BUDGET AND IN SOME CASES INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT (THE SPRAGUE & HENWOOD MODEL 40 CL CORE DRILL WAS NOT CAPABLE OF THE REQUIRED PERFORMANCE AND WILL BE REPLACED BY A MODEL 142 C), PROSPECTING RESULTS LARGELY JUSTIFIED PROJECT MANAGER'S STATEMENT (IN HIS REPORT OF JULY 3, 1973) THAT ULTRABASIC ROCKS OF MUSONGATI MASSIF PROBABLY CONTAIN A DEPOSIT OF LATERITIC NICKEL, AND THERE IS EVIDENCE SUGGESTING POSSIBILITY OF ISOLATED NICKEL-BEARING VEINS ALONG SOUTHERN EDGE OF THE MASSIF. "EVALUATION ATTEMPT"

,
INCLUDED IN PROJECT MANAGER'S REPORT WAS MADE SOLELY TO ESTIMATE PROBABLE IMPORTANCE OF THE FIELD STUDIES AND IS SUBJECT TO FUTURE REVISION.

4. ESTIMATION OF DEPTH OF OVERBURDEN, ESSENTIAL TO QUESTION OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MINABILITY, WAS BASED ON THE RESULTS OF DRILLING EIGHT BOREHOLES (SIX ON THE RUBARA PLATEAU AND TWO ON GEYUKA) SPACED ON 200 METER CENTERS. ONLY FOUR OF THE RUBARA HOLES PRODUCED RELIABLE CORES, RANGING FROM AN OVERBURDEN-DEPTH HIGH OF 48 METERS TO A LOW OF 18 METERS. THE TWO OTHER HOLES SHOWED 20 AND 35 METERS DEPTH, AND ELECTRICAL RESISTIVITY MEASUREMENTS (INTENDED FOR RELIABILITY CHECK AGAINST POSITIVE BOREHOLE FINDINGS) VARIED FROM 15 TO 30 METERS. CORES FROM THE TWO DRILLINGS ON GEYUKA SHOWED 23 AND 24 METER

THICKNESS OF OVERBURDEN. NO DRILLING WAS UNDERTAKEN ON THE BEHINDA PLATEAU BUT THE OVERBURDEN WAS ASSUMED TO BE COMPARABLE TO RUBARA. ON THIS LIMITED AND LARGELY CONTRADICTORY INFORMATION, COMMENTARY ESTIMATES AN OVERALL OVERBURDEN DEPTH TO ORE OF 22-25 METERS.

5. CORES FROM THE SAME SIX HOLES PROVIDED THE ONLY POSITIVE DATA FOR CALCULATING THICKNESS OF ORE BODY. USING A SPREAD OF FROM 5 TO 25 METERS (THE OTHER TWO SHOWED 9 METERS AND 21 METERS) FOR RUBARA, AND RESULTS OF 4 METERS AND 13 METERS ON GEYUKA AND AGAIN ASSUMING BEHINDA EQUIVALENT TO RUBARA, COMMENTARY STATES THAT ORE ON RUBARA AND BEHINDA AVERAGES 15 METERS IN THICKNESS AND IS 10 METERS THICK ON GEYUKA. AN AVERAGE GRADE OF OVER TWO PERCENT NICKEL IS ASSUMED FROM A STUDY OF SAMPLES TAKEN FROM SAME SIX BOREHOLES. A WEIGHTED AVERAGE OF 2.35 PERCENT NICKEL IS ASSIGNED TO RUBARA, 1.8 PERCENT TO GEYUKA AND, ON THE BASIS OF SAMPLING OF OUTCROPS, TRENCHES AND SOIL AUGER MATERIAL A SIMPLE AVERAGE OF 2.25 PERCENT NICKEL IS GIVEN FOR UNDRILLED BEHINDA. DRY SAMPLES FROM ONLY FOUR OF THE HOLES WERE USED TO ARRIVE AT AN ESTIMATE OF SPECIFIC WEIGHT OF ORE, GIVEN AS 1.85 KILOGRAMS PER CUBIC DECIMETER IN THE COMMENTARY.

6. PROJECT MANAGER INFORMED MURCHISON THAT DUNITE, SPERPENTINITE AND TREVORITE (NI FE₂ O₄) HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED IN SAMPLES FROM THE ORE VEIN LOCATED. DUNITE, IN QUANTITY, AND A FEW SPECIMENS OF SERPENTINITE WERE OBSERVED IN THE MATERIAL AT THE GRB MINES DEPARTMENT. THE TREVORITE WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED IN MATERIAL SENT TO THE SODEMI LABORATORY IN ABIDJAN, IVORY COAST.

7. COMMENT: IN A REGION AS DEVOID OF INFRASTRUCTURE, MINERAL INDUSTRY SUPPORT AND SKILLED TECHNICIANS AS CENTRAL BURUNDI, EXPLOITATION OF A MINERAL DEPOSIT WILL PROBABLY BE CONSIDERED BY MAJOR INVESTORS ONLY AFTER EXISTENCE OF A HIGH-GRADE ORE BODY HAS BEEN PROVEN. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANY BASE MINERAL COULD BE PROFITABLY EXPORTED IN FORM OF ORE OR CONCENTRATE, AND THERE IS NO POTENTIAL OFFICIAL USE

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TIAL DOMESTIC DEMAND FOR SUCH MATERIAL. NICKEL WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO BE PROCESSED TO FERRONICKEL TO JUSTIFY HEAVY INVESTMENT REQUIRED

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 IO-15 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03

AID-20 COME-00 FRB-02 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02

LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-10 SS-15 STR-08 CEA-02 INT-08

DRC-01 /190 W

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R 050700Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4041

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

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FOR CREATION OF TRANSPORTATION AND POWER-PRODUCING FACILITIES. THIS FURTHER INCREASES NECESSITY FOR PROVING AN EXTENSIVE ORE BODY OF HIGH VALUE MATERIAL BEFORE SEEKING EXPLOITATION CAPITAL. PRESENT WORLD SITUATION OF OVER SUPPLY AND IMPENDING NEW SOURCES OF NICKEL (AUSTRALIA, NEW CALEDONIA AND INDONESIA) DOES NOT INDICATE LIKELIHOOD OF A MAJOR MINING COMPANY UNDERTAKING A VENTURE IN BURUNDI ON OTHER THAN STRONGEST EVIDENCE OF A PAYABLE ORE DEPOSIT. ONLY A MAJOR MINING COMPANY OR LARGE CONSORTIUM OF INVESTORS COULD SUCCESSFULLY EXPLOIT A MINE IN CENTRAL BURUNDI. PRESENT UNDP PROJECT WAS NOT INTENDED TO DETERMINE ANYTHING BEYOND EXISTENCE OR ABSENCE OF MINERALIZED ZONES WITHIN THE AREAS UNDER INVESTIGATION, AND IT WOULD BE UNFAIR TO ASSUME OR EXPECT MORE DEFINITE RESULTS. THE PRELIMINARY WORK JUST COMPLETED MAY HAVE ESTABLISHED SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE FOR MORE DETAILED STUDIES BEYOND SCOPE OF CURRENT PROJECT, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUT IT HAS NOT WARRANTED PUBLICITY AND ASSUMPTIONS RESULTING FROM APPARENT OVERENTHUSIASM ON THE PART OF SOME UN AND GRB PERSONNEL.

8. EMBASSY AGREED RECOMMENDATIONS: AS PRESENTLY CONSTITUTED PRO-

JECT IS SCHEDULED FOR CONTINUATION THROUGHOUT 1974, AND AN OFFICIAL-
LY SANCTIONED REPORT IS PLANNED FOR RELEASE IN ABOUT TEN MONTHS.
INTERIM PERIOD OF FIELD ACTIVITY SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE WATCHED BY
EMBASSY OFFICERS, WHO HAVE PERSONAL CONTACTS WITHIN UN TEAM AND
GRB MINES DEPARTMENT. INTEREST SHOULD BE LOW-KEY, AND PUBLICITY
DISCOURAGED WHENEVER POSSIBLE. INDIVIDUAL CLAIMS SHOULD BE TREATED
WITH CAUTION UNTIL UNQUESTIONABLE REPORTS HAVE BEEN ISSUED.
PARTICULAR ATTENTION SHOULD BE PAID TO ANY INCREASE IN STAFF OR LOCAL
CONCENTRATION OF EFFORT FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF FORTHCOMING AIRBORNE
MAGNETOMETER SURVEY BY HUNTING AIR SERVICES. RESULTS FROM STUDIES OF
CORES OBTAINED BY DRILLING WITH THE NEW SPRAGUE & HENWOOD 142 C
WILL ALSO BE VERY INTERESTING. INQUIRIES AND PERHAPS VISITS FROM
MINING INTERESTS WILL INEVITABLY RESULT FROM THE RECENT PUBLICITY.
THEY SHOULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED, BUT IT SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED THAT
THE UN TEAM HAS NOT YET FOUND A PRIMARY DEPOSIT OF NICKEL AND HAS
NOT DEFINED AN ORE BODY. PREFERABLE THAT COMMENTARY TO PROJECT
MANAGER'S UNPUBLISHED REPORT NOT RPT NOT BE MADE AVAILABLE.
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